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with Dr Jonathan

Literary Types and Techniques
(Level: Intermediate)

Common Genres (1)

Genre means a type or category of art (e.g., genres of music include: blues, classical, jazz, pop, rock, etc.)
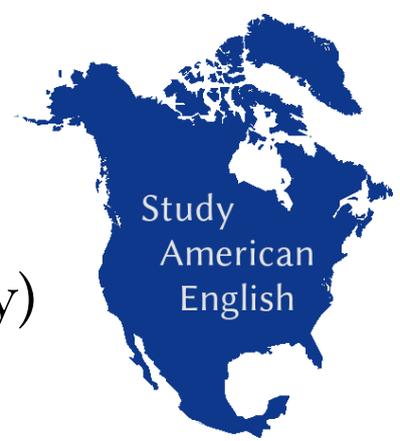
Academic – nonfiction articles, books, essays, etc.

Ballad – a poem or song with a simple rhythm and repeated verses or stanzas, often patriotic

Comedy – funny, humorous writing

Drama – has the form/structure of a theatrical play, focusing on people's conversations and feelings instead of on actions

Common Genres (2)

Eulogy or elegy – especially at a funeral, a tribute praising someone or something (eulogy) or mourning their death (elegy)

Free verse, stream of consciousness – a flowing, chaotic, disorganized style of writing

Mythology – a usually old story, which probably contains some fantasy (e.g., traditional stories about the creation of the world)

Narrative – a story told by someone (called a "narrator")

Novel – a long narrative that takes several hours or days to read

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Common Genres (3)

Poetry
    may or may not tell a story
    short verses or metered sentences
    usually emotional, rhyming, or like song lyrics

Short story, novella – a narrative short enough to be read all at once (like a written TV episode)

Tragedy – a sad story, traditionally where many of the characters in the story die

Plot Techniques (1)

Allegory and parable – **Allegory** is when a character in a story represents something abstract. For example, in Star Trek, the alien race called Vulcans represent logic, the Klingons represent war and violence, etc. A **parable** is a short story that teaches a lesson. Parables often use allegory.

Allusion and foreshadowing – **Allusion** is when a story makes a reference to something earlier in the story or to another similar story. **Foreshadowing** is when a story gives a subtle clue or hint about what is going to happen later in the story.

Catharsis – when a strong emotion is portrayed in order to try to help the audience deal with it, feel relief from it, etc. For example, a violent battle scene might try to help the audience deal with their trauma about that war.

Denouement – when a story is resolved neatly/cleanly at the end, leaving no ambiguity or complexity. For example, the end of a mystery novel might tell the reader who the murderer was.

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Plot Techniques (2)

Deus ex machina – from Latin, "God from the machine" is when some powerful force or being suddenly arrives and fixes a big problem, usually at the end of a story.

Hubris – extreme arrogance, pride, or over-confidence, which usually causes someone to fail. For example, "Colonialism's hubris was shortly followed by its failure."

Nemesis, antagonist – the bad person or thing that tries to destroy the good character (the protagonist) in a story

Paradox – a logical contradiction or impossibility. For example, "It is not a paradox for a person to be both beautiful and intelligent."

Soliloquy – when a character makes a long speech while standing alone

Word Techniques (1)

Imagery – painting a picture by writing, describing something in a way that produces an image in the mind of the reader. For example, "As a melon-colored sunrise crested on the distant horizon, morning dew that had collected on the grass overnight glistened like a thousand diamonds."

Irony and sarcasm

Irony and sarcasm are when you mean the opposite of what you are saying. **Sarcasm** is when it is done as a criticism of something. For example, "Oh, of course you're right; you're always right" could mean that someone really thinks someone else is always wrong.

An **ironic situation** is when something turns out the opposite of how you would expect. For example, "Ironically, the self-government sought by the US from the British in the 1700s was given to Canada by the British in the 1800s."

Word Techniques (2)

Hyperbole – using extreme exaggeration to make a strong point. For example, "Thank you a thousand times."

Metaphor – describes a specific new/unknown experience in terms of its similarity to more a well-known experience.

    Obvious: "Life is like a box of chocolates" (Forrest Gump films).

    Subtle: The file deletion feature of computers is often called a trash can, recycling bin, etc., so that people can relate something that might be new to them to an experience they probably know well.

Meter – the rhythm of how a poem, song, or sentence is pronounced. For example, song lyrics might be written to go with a 4/4 musical rhythm.

Metonymy – when someone or something famous is known by a characteristic name. For example, "That's a Picasso" instead of "That's a painting by the artist Picasso."

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Word Techniques (3)

Oxymoron – making a phrase from words that seem to be the opposite of each other. For example, though "fresh" usually means good or healthy (e.g., "fresh food"), some people say "Fresh violence erupted in the city today."

Personification – to present something inhuman as human. For example, "Rain is the sky crying."

Simile – comparisons using "like" or "as"

"**Like**" is for comparing nouns: "She has blond hair, like her mother."

"**As**" is for comparing verbs: "She went to the grocery store on her way home, as she does every night."

Word Sounds

Alliteration and assonance

    Alliteration is when the same consonant is repeated at the beginning of several nearby words: "The **b**oy's **b**lue **b**all **b**ounced **b**ehind the **b**uilding."

    Assonance is when a vowel sound or pattern of consonants is repeated: "Lean the cr**ate** against the g**ate**."

Euphony – from Greek, "good-sounding" is when certain words are used because they sound good. For example, when speaking in an American accent, "can't" sounds better with an 'ae' sound, but when speaking in a British accent, "can't" sounds better with an 'aa' sound.

Onomatopoeia – from Greek, is when a word sounds like it's meaning: bang, crash, jab or stab, smack, thud, or whistle

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